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23 February 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Factors Affecting Photographic Coverage  
of Cuba, September 6th to October 14th

Low-Level Flights

1. At your request, General Carter on August 30th mentioned to the Special Group the need for additional flights over Cuba and at that time brought up the matter of 101's in low-level reconnaissance. At General Carter's request, on September 1st and 2nd the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) met to consider the kind of information that could be obtained through use of RF-101/F8U-type aircraft. As a result of these deliberations and because of the heavy cloud cover encountered over eastern Cuba on the September 5th mission, General Carter on September 10th, 1962 addressed a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense recommending that the Secretary initiate the necessary action to provide for employment of tactical-type reconnaissance against [REDACTED] identified by COMOR on September 1st, 1962 as being suitable for low-level reconnaissance. A copy of General Carter's September 10th memorandum is attached at Tab A.

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2. These actions by General Carter were consistent with your desire to request low-level flights where ominous situations appeared from high-level photographic interpretation or from other sources, and the concern over the Banes installation was the first such instance.

3. In the September 14th Special Group meeting it was noted that the Secretary of Defense did not wish low-level reconnaissance of Banes considered until the results of CIA reconnaissance in that area became available. Since no high-level flights were flown successfully between September 5th and 26th because of bad weather, no further requests were made.

#### High-Level Flights

4. The U-2 mission of August 29th covered virtually the entire island and identified eight SAM sites in western Cuba. It also discovered an installation at Banes that was not familiar to the photo interpreters. Subsequent research by the interpreters, comparing the photography of August 29th with photography of two similar installations recently noted in Communist China, had by September 14th enabled them to identify the installation as a cruise missile site. The information first appeared in an intelligence publication on September 17th.

5. The flight of September 5th over central and eastern Cuba identified three additional SAM sites in central Cuba but encountered heavy cloud cover over eastern Cuba, including the Banes area.

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6. At a meeting in Mr. Bundy's office on September 10th, General Carter presented a CIA proposal for the second flight for September. COMOR, in undeniably good judgment, had determined that the highest priority for the next U-2 flight should be assigned to Banes and eastern Cuba. Using this COMOR expression of need, CIA operational units developed a suitable track, which was offered for approval at the September 10th meeting. This track would have given us approximately 11,700 square miles of area susceptible to highly accurate photo interpretation.

7. In the September 10th meeting, at the direction of the Special Group, and at the insistence of Secretary Rusk, the CIA-proposed single flight was changed and four flights were ordered: two wholly peripheral, involving no land overflight; one over the Isle of Pines; and one over the eastern tip of Cuba. The total square mileage of good photography from these four flights would have been 7,500.

COMMENT: There were nine SAM sites (eight in eastern Cuba and one on the Isle of Pines) that could not have been discovered until some time during the latter part of September or very early October when they were installed. The CIA-proposed single flight therefore would not have provided photographic evidence of these nine SAM areas until late September. Because the four flights approved at the September 10th meeting extended until 7 October, all nine of the areas were actually covered, and the nine SAM sites were identified.

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8. The factor of weather was a very serious obstacle to completing the photographic coverage. Much of Cuba was under heavy cloud cover throughout most of September, and the cloud patterns were rapidly and continuously changing. The four-flight approval made it possible for us to fly one of the missions whenever a relatively small fragment of eastern Cuba was clear. Even then, the first of the four approved flights was not successful until September 26th.

9. In retrospect, had the CIA-proposed flight been approved, it might have been attempted on September 15th, when the forecast was favorable for a brief period.

COMMENT: It is impossible to say at this point whether the flight would or would not have been attempted on the 15th. Although good weather was predicted for most of eastern Cuba, the Isle of Pines and the Bay of Pigs and Banes areas were under heavy cloud cover. The Banes installation had been firmly identified on September 14th, but it is doubtful that this word would have filtered through to the flight-planners prior to the go-no-go briefing late on the 14th. Since Banes was the highest priority target for search on the CIA-proposed single flight, it is likely that the mission would have been held up until Banes was clear (or identified) and the good weather day would have been missed.

10. Assuming now that the flight had been carried out on September 15th, the intelligence community, following receipt of the photography would have been in the following position:

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a. The nature of the Banes installation would have been known from continuing readout of the August 29th photography, which had been completed by September 14th. Banes would no longer carry top priority.

b. Photography taken in late September and early October indicated that construction at none of the SAM sites in eastern Cuba began before about the third week in September. If we had flown on the 15th of September, it is likely that no SAM sites would have been discovered. This flight would have exhausted the September authorizations, and COMOR would have had to restate targets for additional operations.

11. With the completion of a flight over eastern Cuba on September 15th, it is reasonable to assume that COMOR and the rest of the intelligence community would have requested coverage of the western half, which had not been covered since the flights of August 29th and September 5th, or that COMOR might have sought island-wide coverage--to check the West and have another try at the East. Allowing time for COMOR consideration of all available readout (including that of a September 15th flight), the refinement of targets and preparation of proposed tracks, a CIA request for permission to cover the western half or the entire island might have been ready for

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submission to the Special Group in the third week of September. In that case, and in event of approval, the first date of extensive Category II weather for a flight that might have found MRBM or IRBM sites was on 6 October.

COMMENT: It is equally possible that COMOR would have proposed the next flight to cover the Isle of Pines, the Bay Pigs area, and the eastern tip of Cuba, which could not have been covered because of poor weather during our hypothetical flight of September 15th.

12. In sum, had our proposal been accepted on September 10th, our immediate interests in eastern Cuba might have been satisfied on September 15th. In actual fact, because four missions were directed instead of our one, the poor weather and the necessity for specific planning for each of the four missions meant that they were not completed until 7 October.

COMMENT: As noted earlier in the comment on paragraph 9, it is by no means certain that the CIA-proposed single flight would have been attempted on September 15th. The next good weather day over much of the CIA-proposed route was October 4th.

13. Turning to the question of "timidity" in not urging the frequent use of U-2's over SAM sites in Cuba, it should be noted that CIA, in planning for any U-2 operations over well-defended, denied territory, was always aware of criticism that attended the U-2 incident over the

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USSR in May 1960. See Tab B for a discussion of prevailing attitudes regarding the U-2.

14. The September 10th meeting followed closely on the heels of the straying of a U-2 over Sakhalin and the loss of a Chinese U-2 over the China mainland. These incidents served to sharpen the already existing apprehensions as to the propriety of overhead reconnaissance. Within CIA there was always at the backs of our minds the knowledge that in the event of a mishap we would have to be able to explain, convincingly and in detail, the justification (in terms of the highest priority intelligence needs) for having undertaken the mission.

15. A chronology of U-2 missions from September 6th to October 14th is attached at Tab C.

/S/ J. S. Earman/

J. S. Earman  
Inspector General

Attachments:

Tab A, B and C.

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C-O-P-Y

COMOR-D-24/16

A

10 September 1962

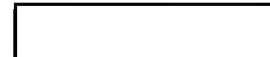
MEMORANDUM FOR: Secretary of Defense  
SUBJECT: Tactical Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. At an executive session of the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) held on 8 September 1962, and at the request of the Defense Intelligence Agency representative, the need for conducting tactical reconnaissance of Cuba was discussed and the following conclusions reached.
2. The facility near Banes, Cuba (205850N/753815W) initially described by the National Photographic Interpretation Center as a possible surface-to-air missile site needs additional coverage. It is considered by the COMOR that at this time this specific objective is by itself the highest priority for satisfaction by photo reconnaissance means.
3. In order to establish the exact function and the operational characteristics of this facility, it is the conclusion of COMOR that this target will almost certainly in the near future require photography of a larger scale than can be acquired by the U-2.
4. It is recommended that you initiate the necessary action (including Special Group approval) to provide for the employment, when directed by higher authority, of tactical-type reconnaissance against Banes or other targets as are identified in COMOR-D-24/15, which was made available to DIA on 1 September 1962.

(signed)

Marshall S. Carter  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Acting Director

Copy 1--Sec. of Defense  
2--Chief of Staffs  
3--D&R/NRO



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C-O-P-Y

COMOR-D-24/15

5 September 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

SUBJECT :

Requirements and Targets Applicable  
for Tactical-type Aerial Reconnaissance  
over Cuba

For the information and reference of COMOR there is attached a paper on the above subject which COMOR approved at its meeting on 3 September (see COMOR-M-102, paragraph 2). This memorandum was subsequently forwarded to the Acting Director of Central Intelligence for his information.

(signed)

Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

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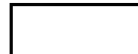
Attachment:

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C-O-P-Y

COMOR-D-24/15

**Requirements and Targets Applicable for  
Tactical-Type Aerial Reconnaissance  
over Cuba**


1. In pursuance of your request that the COMOR examine the kind of information which could be obtained through the use of RF101/F8U-type of aircraft to complement the present U-2 reconnaissance of Cuba and to indicate in order of priority the information and the targets which have been submitted to COMOR, the following is reported:

a. Tactical-type reconnaissance aircraft could acquire information on the identified SAM sites which would permit more reliable estimates of the operational status. This can be derived from observation of personnel activity, rotation of antennae and missiles at the ready position. It was recognized that acquiring this information could provide details of similar equipment deployed in the Soviet Union, which is not susceptible to overflight reconnaissance.

Specific Targets:

(1) Mariel SAM site (230055N-824930W) believed to be most advanced deployed site located to date.

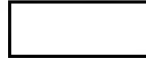
(2) SAM assembly area at Santiago de las Vegas (225740N-822130W).

b. Information could be procured on possible  facility at Torrens (2258N-8229W) which may be an installation designed to gain information on the U. S. guided missiles program.

c. Tactical characteristics of small combat naval aircraft, their armament, and associated equipment could be obtained. KOMAR Patrol Guided Missile Gunboats with associated equipment are tied up at pier at Mariel Port (2301N-8245W).

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COMOR D-24/15

d. Information on the nature of hitherto located underground construction (including that occurring in caves) which might be associated with missile activities.

Specific Targets:

(1) Secured area with 3 underground drive-through structures protected by weapons positions. ([REDACTED]).

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(2) Recently constructed concrete building serviced by 2 drive-through structures. Area is revetted and appears to be in process of being covered with earth. ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]).

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(3) Underground probable weapons storage (225620N-822240W).

(a) Definitive technical characteristics of armored vehicles, tanks, prime movers, self-propelled guns and mobile communications equipment (electronic vans) can also be procured.

2. In addition, such reconnaissance aircraft could also provide timely information pertinent to contingency planning or needed for tactical or operational planning, which would not be available from U-2 photography, such as:

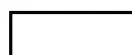
a. Detailed characteristics of defensive works, emplacements, trench systems, and revetments.

b. Location and identification of armor and vehicles in wooded areas or where camouflage is employed.

c. Current detailed information on other non-military installations of interest to operations.

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COMOR-D-24/15

3. The foregoing was discussed at a COMOR meeting on 1 September 1962 and agreed at a special meeting on 3 September. At the first meeting Colonel Steakley of the JCS/JRC was present. He indicated he needed advice on what requirements in Cuba could be met by tactical type reconnaissance aircraft which the U-2 could not meet. The targets listed above were made available to Colonel Steakley by DIA on 4 September.

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23 February 1963

POLICY AND RISK FACTORS BEARING ON UTILIZATION OF THE U-2

Today there is almost universal public acceptance of U-2 flights over Cuba. Such reaction by the public and press, or the lack of it, to overflights was not always the case. This paper will review the various views with regard to U-2 overflights for the collection of intelligence from the first public acknowledgment of such flights in May of 1960 until the middle of October 1962.

President Eisenhower's categorization in May of 1960 of U-2 overflights as "a distasteful but vital necessity" and on another occasion as "distasteful espionage activities" is an example of what could be termed a majority view at the time. A few public figures did support the use of such overflights without reservation. There were expressions of extreme concern from some public leaders over the increase in tension which might result from overflights and others voiced the opinion that such flights were illegal or immoral. Such comments regarding the U-2 and overflights in general ranged from Senator Morse's statement that

. . . the use of the U-2 spy plane . . . constituted an act of aggression . . . and . . . a danger of provoking war . . .

down to more moderate statements such as Senator Symington's that this is a matter of such

scope and importance . . . that that would be a matter of interest and grave concern to the highest people in our Government.

Along this same line, Senator Jackson's Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery stated in a report that intelligence operations, being instruments of national policy, "must be subject to effective and continuing higher review and coordination. This includes a weighing of gains against risks." Both Senators Humphrey and Talmadge expressed deep concern over the danger that an overflight might be viewed as an armed attack and therefore such flights could easily turn the cold war into a shooting one. Senator

was made to the difference between the use of intelligence agents and the use of overflights. There seemed to be a general, well-expressed fear ". . . that aerial excursions of this sort will trigger a clash through misunderstanding or even set off a major retaliatory attack." As was stated in the WALL STREET JOURNAL, ". . . a cloak and dagger operative could hardly start retaliatory missiles on their way. A plane, even unarmed, might." Again reference was made for the necessity to weigh the gains against the risk at the highest level, the risk uppermost in the minds of a goodly percentage of the press being accidental clash which might easily be "the seeds of holocaust." We can still recall the furor raised when George Allen, then head of USIA, mistakenly indicated 15 May 1960 that the United States had neither cancelled nor approved future flights.

The downing of an RE-47 reconnaissance plane by Soviet fighters in July 1960 brought further statements from the press questioning the principle of overflights in general. It seemed that the aura of crisis and guilt surrounding the May 1960 overflight had to some extent attached itself to any type of air probing including peripheral flights.

Against this background of universal repugnance, or, at the very least, extreme uneasiness regarding overflights, with some grudging acceptance of the necessity for such flights, we must view the incidents in the summer of 1962. It must be remembered that the shooting down of a U-2 aircraft over Communist China was announced by Peiping on 10 September 1962, the very day the Special Group met to consider the request of the Acting Director of Central Intelligence for an extensive U-2 flight covering certain portions of Cuba. This announcement by the CHICOMS came on the heels of a Soviet complaint that a U-2 had violated Soviet air space over Sakhalin. Within hours of the Soviet protest, the State Department replied and included in its answer a statement that the United States had not altered its policy that banned overflights.

The vulnerability of the U-2 to Soviet SA-2 systems and the discovery of those systems in Cuba contributed further complicating factors in weighing risks against the need for hard intelligence. The information relating to the causes of the downing of Powers' U-2 in May 1960 which was developed upon his return led to the conclusion that the Soviets had a ground-to-air capability with the SA-2 system to knock down a U-2 at its normal operating ceiling. The Director of Central Intelligence had stated this conclusion before the Senate Armed Services

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Committee in Executive Session on 6 March 1962. Having in mind the fact that eight SA-2 sites were discovered in Cuba by the 29 August 1962 flight and three additional SA-2 sites were discovered by the 5 September 1962 flight, it can be seen that the risk factors were tremendously increased. In addition to the normal sensitivity to U-2 overflights because of concern for accidents causing discovery, there was now added the factor of eleven known installations with a capability of knocking the U-2 down with the anticipation that other sites were being constructed.

In any event, U-2 overflights were not lightly considered by responsible Government officials and most careful procedures had been developed in order that only vital target requirements would be programmed and approval sought for individual flights.

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